

# Report from Senator David G. Klindt

May 5, 2006

## *Getting it done right, and early*

It has only happened three times in seventeen years, but it happened with applause and congratulations all around this week. The General Assembly sent the operating budget to the governor's desk a full two days prior to the constitutional deadline.

The budget assumes a growth in the state's general revenue funds of 8.2%, thanks to an economy that's banging away on all cylinders. Using that economic strength, we were able to increase elementary and secondary education spending by \$142 million. This brings our total public education commitment, from kindergarten through college, to more than \$6 billion. Are we meeting our state's top priority of education? Absolutely.

We also brought our Department of Transportation funding total to more than \$2.6 billion. That represents an increase of almost 52%. I'm hoping these extra funds will find their way to the roadways in the Great Northwest, because we desperately need it. Across North Missouri, we have 2,686 miles of lettered highways that are nothing more than oil mixed with gravel. These roads don't hold up to today's transportation requirements and must be upgraded as soon as possible. North Missouri has been ignored by the Department of Transportation long enough!

The Department of Agriculture gets a bump of 13.5%. This includes important subsidies for the development and manufacture of ethanol and biodiesel.

The budget also includes money to crack down on Internet sex crimes, much-needed pay increases for prison guards (who walk the toughest beat in America for very little pay), and an extra \$1 million for Meals on Wheels.

With this budget, all of us are extending a much-deserved helping hand to military families. This program, called "Guard-At-Home," provides workforce development assistance to military spouses. When a soldier marches into harm's way, his family is also sacrificing a great deal in the protection of freedom. They deserve our help.

The Missouri Senate also this week sent to the governor a bill that will be an enormous help to senior citizens who have struggled with the new driver's license requirements. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, we've been forced to follow stricter policies in the issuance of driver's licenses. My office has fielded a number of phone calls from frustrated senior citizens who have had difficulty complying, especially the production of a birth certificate. The bill we sent to the governor this week lets anyone 65 and older use an expired license as proof of "lawful presence" instead of a birth certificate.

Importantly, the Senate also this week passed an excellent bill changing the way eminent domain is used in our state. In a nutshell, this bill protects landowners from having their property taken away by government and handed over to private developers looking to build a Wal-Mart or other private enterprise. Eminent domain should only be used for public purposes, not private profiteering. The people have demanded this reform, and the Senate has responded.

